

2014 National Elections



Mozambique political process bulletin



Special study 2 28 October 2014

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COLLECTIVE ACTION: This newsletter is based on reports from 150 journalists in nearly every district, working together to give the most up to date coverage of the election. We are also working with the Community Radios Forum (FORCOM) and the Human Rights League.

Bulletin special study 2

Special report on invalid and blank votes at PVT polling stations

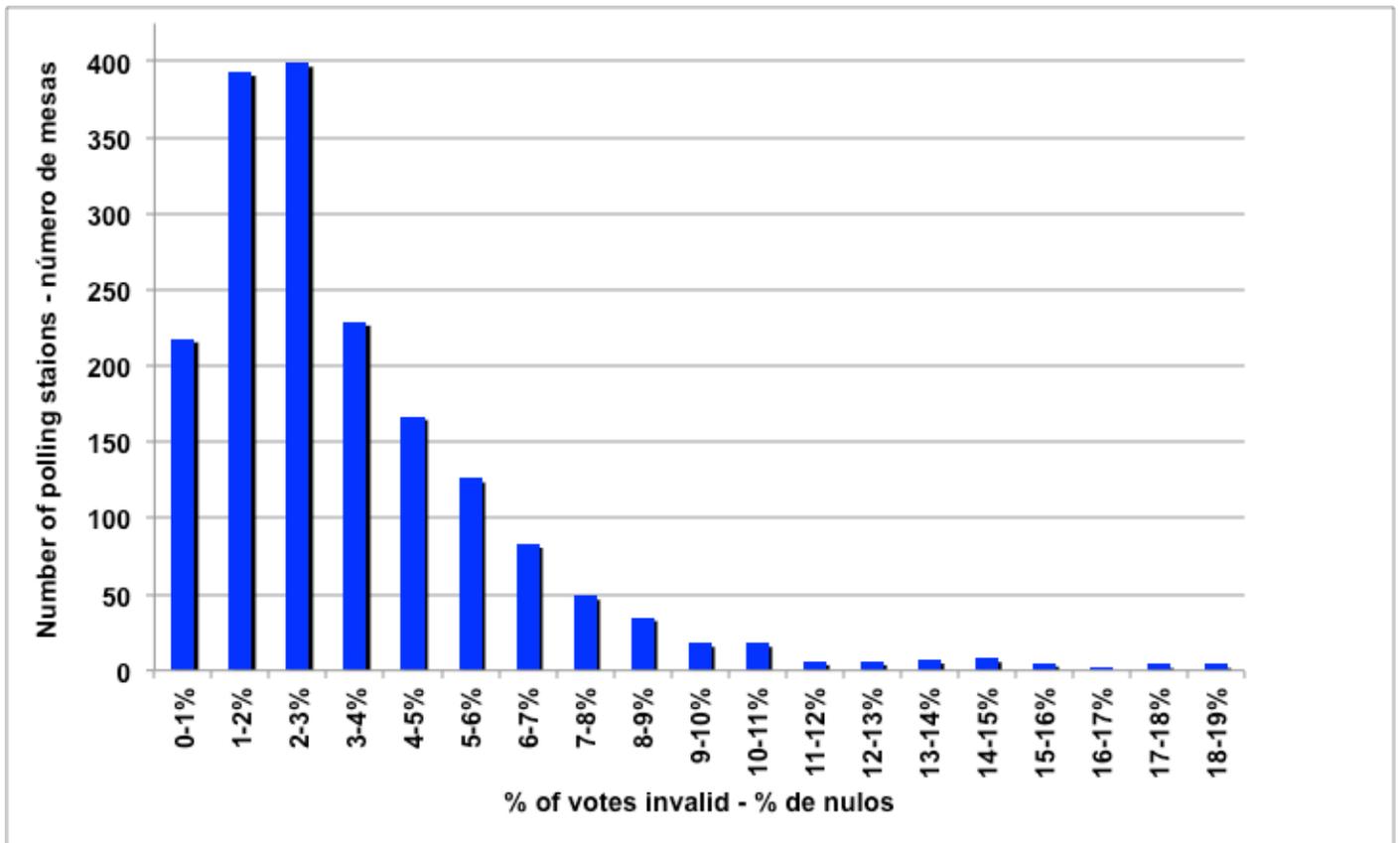
By Joseph Hanlon, 28 October 2014

In this special report, we look at unusually high numbers of invalid and blank ballot papers, based on polling station results as recorded by the PVT (parallel vote tabulation) carried out by EISA for the Electoral Observatory. The data covers 1797 polling stations which was a statistically representative sample of 10.6% of the 17,012 polling stations. The observers collected the data from the official results sheet (edital), either by obtaining an official copy as provided for in the law, or copying the results from the posted edital.

A total of 3.55% of polling stations had more than 10% invalid ballot papers (nulos). We consider over 10% to be suspicious, and to be a possible indicator that polling station staff invalidated opposition ballot papers. But this percentage is down from the 4.5% of 2009.

Invalid votes

The chart shows the percentage of nulos of the 1797 sample polling stations for the presidential election. We have divided the nulos into 1% bands, 0-1%, 1-2%, etc, and each bar shows the number of polling stations with that percentage of nulos. Thus the two tallest bars shows that 393 polling stations had between 1% and 2% nulos, and 399 polling stations had between 2% and 3% nulos. But polling stations in both EPC Luagala, Ngauma, Niassa and EPC 25 de Junho, Marromeu, Sofala had 56% invalid votes in the presidential election. The presidential ballot paper is simple, with just three candidates and large squares for the voter to make their mark. We do not believe that more than half of voters did not know how to vote or decided to spoil their ballot papers. In the entire PVT sample, nulos were 3.55% of the total vote. As in past elections, we consider a rate of nulos of over 10% to be suspect.



In the sample, there are 81 polling stations with nulos more than 10%; this is 4.5% of all polling stations in the sample. Compared to the average 3.55% nulos, these polling stations have an average of 40 invalid ballot papers extra - which we assume to be mainly votes taken away from the opposition. These "extra" invalid ballot papers represent 0.66% of the total valid votes in the PVT sample, which suggests more than 30,000 ballot papers were improperly made invalid.

There have been two ways to make opposition ballot papers invalid. Both occur during the count. Counting takes a long time, and in many polling stations there is little light. Ballot papers for each candidate, and blank and invalid papers, are put in separate piles, usually on the floor. During the counting process, when no one is looking, polling station staff can tamper with the piles. This is done in two ways.

One method is to go to the pile of opposition votes on the floor and quickly add a fingerprint to a whole group. Because it is done quickly to a group of papers, the fingerprint is similar and in the same place on each ballot paper. The nulos are all kept together in the same order as they pass from polling station to CNE, so it is obvious during requalification that there is an identical fingerprint on a series of ballot papers. This became so blatant and obvious in 2009 that the law was changed to require that all ink be removed from the room before the count. Nevertheless, we did see evidence that this continues; for example, we saw a group of such ballot papers for the parliamentary election in Zambézia, where ballots with an X in box for Renamo also had a fingerprint in the Frelimo box, and the fingerprints seemed suspiciously similar.

The second kind of fraud is simpler. Sometimes valid votes for the opposition are simply put into the pile of invalid votes and not counted. But in the requalification, these are accepted as valid and counted, so the attempted fraud fails.

In 2004 the PVT showed 3.9% nulos for president before requalification, and in 2009 this jumped to 4.5% because of increased fraud. For this election the PVT found only 3.55% invalid votes.

In 2009 the PVT found 6% of polling stations with nulos over 10%, compared to only 4.5% this year.

There were polling stations with more than 10% nulos in all provinces, but this was particularly common in these districts.

- Cabo Delgado: Chiure
- Manica: Mossurize
- Nampula: Momba
- Niassa: Mecanhelas
- Sofala: Marromeu
- Tete: Angónia
- Zambezia: Milange and Ile

Marromeu is notable because in the municipal election last year the Frelimo candidate Palmerim Rubin beat his MDM opponent João Agostinho by just 283 votes, 4518 to 4235. But there were 11% nulos, a total of 1119 votes. These numbers suggest that Frelimo could have won the election in Marromeu improperly by invalidating more than 283 opposition votes.

Blank votes

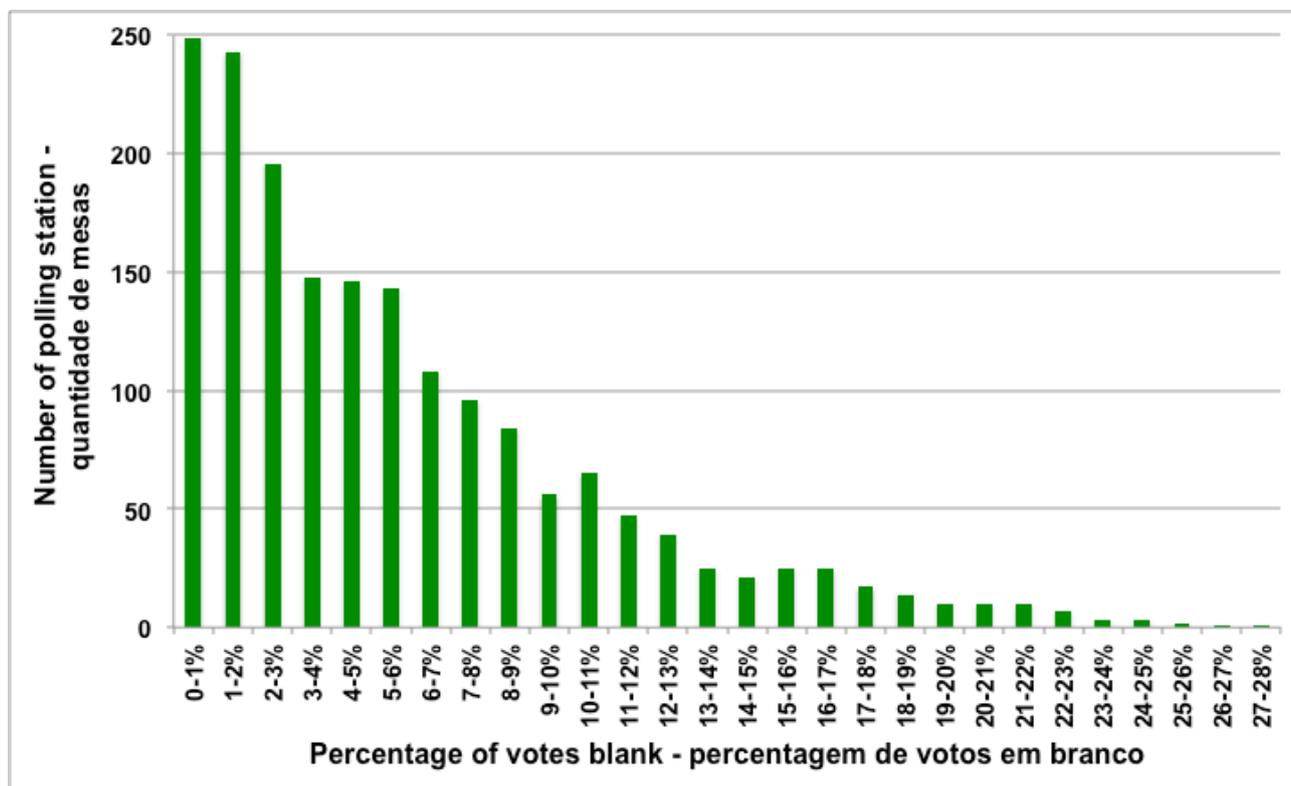
The chart below is of the percentage of blank votes. This probably indicates people who did not know how to vote and so simply put the blank ballot paper in the box, but it could also indicate some sort of protest.

Three polling stations had very high blank votes and are not included in the chart:

- Zambézia: Inhassunge, EP1 de Abreu, 37%
- Tete: Marávia, EP1 de Chibovu, 36% and Angónia, EP1 de N'khathwe, 31%.

Chiure district in Cabo Delgado had 16% blank ballot papers, which is very high. Mogavolas, Nampula had 13% blank votes and Ile, Zambézia 11%.

There were 6% blank votes in the 2009 presidential election and the PVT found 5.25% in this one.



A detailed report on the 2009 elections is available, in two parts, on
<http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-1a> and <http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-2>

The Portuguese edition of the Bulletin is more detailed, and can be read on
<http://www.cip.org.mz/election2013/> Portuguese Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CIP.Eleicoes>
Some English bulletins cover two Portuguese bulletins and have a double number.

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